Published: Jan. 24, 2018, *Indiana Lawyer* (Page 4)

https://www.theindianalawyer.com/articles/45938-milk-on-the-move-benefit-helps-nursing-moms-while-they-travel

Nursing mothers who use Milk Stork can use the “Pump & Ship” option to use FedEx Priority Overnight to send their breast milk home while they are away. (Photo courtesy of Milk Stork)

Judy Okenfuss

Kate Torgersen

Tracy Betz

Milk on the move: Benefit helps nursing moms while they travel

By Rob Burgess

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Nursing mothers facing the prospect of a days-long business trip are often presented with a dilemma. They can either switch their baby's diet to formula for the time being, or store milk ahead of schedule. Such attorneys at Ice Miller, however, no longer must make these choices while traveling for work.

The Indianapolis firm has partnered with a California-based company, Milk Stork, starting this year.

Attorneys who are expressing breast milk have two options under the program. They can either have their breast milk shipped by FedEx Priority Overnight at no cost to them, or they can take the refrigerated liquid home with them using a provided carry-on bag.

“Any woman who has ever nursed a baby will understand very quickly,” said Judy Okenfuss, managing partner at Ice Miller.

The policy went into effect Jan. 1, and was announced by the firm Jan. 4.

“Our goal is to have a diverse work force as much as possible, so we are looking for innovative ways to allow flexibility and work with people,” said Okenfuss.

Starting Milk Stork

Kate Torgersen, Milk Stork CEO, started the company in August 2015 after facing a nursing predicament of her own. The mother of three was scheduled to leave for a four-day business trip in 2014.

She had breastfed her first child, Jack, for the first 18 months. When she started the company, she was producing a gallon of breast milk every day for her twins, Zoë and Finn. She said she made a promise to herself they would receive the same as her first. She said she didn't want a trip to be the reason she broke that pledge. So, she froze two extra gallons, pumped two more on the road, stored them in a hotel minifridge and then brought home through airport security.

"I got back from that trip and I was like, 'This is ridiculous,'" she said.

Torgersen said the business began pouring in soon after the company went live. Milk Stork had its first orders from individual mothers within a few hours and their first enterprise inquiry after only 10 days in operation. The company now boasts nearly 90 enterprise clients, around half of which have signed up since September 2017.

"We're supporting thousands of moms in the U.S., and it's just been this amazing ride," she said.

Torgersen said that while Ice Miller was the first law firm in Indiana to participate, she expected more to follow.

"It's a very small benefit that provides a very high (return on investment)

for an important group of people," she said.

Following suit

Indeed, other Hoosier law firms have begun to take notice.

Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP partner Tracy Betz is the co-chair of the firm's gender advancement committee. One of the subcommittees focuses on travel for working mothers. She said the group was already in the process of submitting a memorandum to their executive committee supporting covering the cost of breast milk shipment, but that they were waiting on elections from the start of the year to be finalized before proceeding.

"We have no doubt the executive committee is going to support it," she said. "The younger women in the office are totally excited about it. It eliminates such a burden."•